

Weaving the Word

Babbling Like Pagans

Part 32 – May 17, 2015

Welcome to where we're learning to discern the difference between religion and good news.

We're on the hill. Apprenticeship training. *Let's go!*



Last week, Jesus warned us not to act like a hypocrite.

This week, He warns us not to pray like one.

“And when you pray, **do not be like the hypocrites**, [lit. *actors; pretenders*] for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.” – Matthew 6:5 NIV

What's their reward? Short-lived approval from short-lived people.



King James (1566-1625)

Ever see someone pray in a group and take on a resonance and reverence and theological language they don't normally express?

That's King James (to the left), the only one who could ever *sincerely speak* “King James”. I wonder what *Jimmy* tried to sound like when *he* prayed.

I don't think that's your problem; I don't see *you* doing that.

However, ever feel like you're not pleasing God with your prayer life? You're among friends. We've all been in *that boat!* But, *maybe you're trying to appease Him rather than please Him.*



Do you know what your prayers are *supposed* to sound like?

You.

If they sound like *anything* or *anyone* else, He's displeased.

Know how I know? *He just said!*

“But I don't pray regular enough, long enough, good enough, or enough-enough.”

Well, are you like the hypocrites for professing to be a believer but failing to pray *enough-enough*?

No! Failure doesn't make you a hypocrite ... dishonesty does. Failure makes you a loser.



But, thank the Lord for how much God loves losers!

Just look at Jesus’ disciples. Remember in the garden, *the night He was betrayed*? “**Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?**” (Mat 26:40)

They fail Him. They forsake Him.



He forgave ‘em.

Except for Judas.

He wasn’t a failure; he was a hypocrite.

So, the next time you hear somebody say that churches are filled with hypocrites, you just say, “Ours ain’t; *it’s full o’ losers!*”



Big difference. Seriously. Jesus doesn’t demand sinlessness, but He does demand sincerity. Honesty. Authenticity.

He’ll choose a true loser over a two-faced winner every time!

Judas could’ve been forgiven; but, *real* hypocrites rarely repent.

[Jesus goes on with His young Jewish protégés] “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then **your Father**, who sees what is done in secret, **will reward you.**” – Matthew 6:6 NIV



That’s a promise! So, if you’ve prayed sincerely and privately and haven’t received your reward, only one of two things can be true:

- 1. Jesus has the wrong idea about the Father.**
- 2. You have the wrong idea about the reward.**

When my kids were young I’d come home and they’d say, “What’d you bring?!” And I’d say, “Check my coat pockets!” Unless I hadn’t brought anything; *then* if they said, “What’d you bring?!” I’d say, “ME!” ... and you can imagine what a letdown *that* was.



And they’d keep on begging till they got tired and gave up. But, as they grew up they stopped childishly demanding my gifts, and began to embrace, appreciate, and trust *me* as the giver. *Just go with it for the sake of the analogy ... okay?*

A hypocrite’s reward is short-lived approval; but, **a child’s reward is eternal affection, direction, and assurance.** And you can imagine what a letdown *that* is ... if it’s *not* the reward you’re *after*.

And, if it's not ... *don't bother praying*.

We can only beg for so long before we burn out, and give up.

Now, when Jesus says, “**go into your room, close the door**”, the word for “room” means “a private/secret space”; and the word for “door” here is very broad. It's any closing up of that space.

King James says “closet”. But, they didn't have closets. *Some* had a storeroom, but that'd be the only other door in the house. And, these young men are far away from home. And, Jewish custom, and the Law, dictated praying at set times throughout the day.

So, is Jesus really telling 'em to run home several times a day to pray in a storeroom? No. He's referring to the “private space” they were *already using*: their portable, private, prayer closets.

From ancient times, Jewish men would use a prayer shawl (*tallit*) to create their own personal tabernacle (*tallit* = little tent), a concealed covering providing a shelter of secrecy for prayer.



It was a miniature, mobile version of the *big tent*, Moses' Tabernacle that David's son later replaced with the Temple.

[David said] I long to dwell in your **tent** [*tabernacle*] forever and take refuge in the **shelter** [*cether (H5643) covering or secrecy*] of your **wings**. – Psalm 61:4 NIV

What is it with God and *wings*?

Is it just symbolic? Nope! **Jesus had wings**. Want'a see 'em?

The commanded knotted corners (Num 15:38-40) **of a prayer shawl make wings, or “kanaph”,** (Strong's H3671, in Psalm 61:4) **just like the tabernacle.**

That's why, when Ruth proposes to Boaz, she says ...

“Spread the **corner** [*or, edge*] **of your garment** [*kanaph*] **over me**, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.” – Ruth 3:9b NIV

[Unless you read it in the New King James, where she says] “Take your maidservant **under your wing**, [*kanaph*] for you are a close relative.” – Ruth 3:9b NKJV



Jewish men covered their bride with their *kanaph* to symbolize protection, security, comfort, friendship, and oneness.

Still do.

Malachi (4:2) says the Savior (*our* Kinsman-Redeemer) comes with healing in His *kanaph*, His *wings*, the *fringe* of His garment.



Remember the woman in the crowd who touched the fringe of Jesus' garment and was instantly healed from her issue of blood? (Mat 9:20) Jesus said that her faith had healed her. (Mat 9:21-22) Her faith in *what*?

She *knew* that Jesus was the One that Malachi spoke of. So, she touched His *kanaph*, His *wings*, the *fringe* of His garment. She was the *first*. Nobody else in the crowds had thought of it.

[But, after that ...] ... wherever he went — into villages, towns or countryside — they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge **[or, fringe]** of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed. — Mark 6:56 NIV

Toward the end, when Jesus laments over Jerusalem, He says:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks **under her wings**, but you were not willing!” — Luke 13:34 NIV

The Bridegroom *longs* to cover the bride as her Kinsman Redeemer.

Our reward is the covering of His wings: protection, security, comfort, friendship, and oneness. He longs to provide what He knows that we need. So, don't pray like He doesn't.

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be **heard** **[They think they can manipulate the gods to get what they want]** because of their **many words**. **[Their own efforts]** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” — Matthew 6:7-8 NIV

But, **we do have to trust in His judgment and timing.** And, that's *really* tough at times.



Reproduction of Athena from Jesus' day

Pagans resorted to repeating enchantments over and over to move the hand of their unloving, uncaring pagan gods.

These aren't prayers; they're magic spells and incantations.

They weren't trying to please, but to appease and control.

Many believers unwittingly adopt pagan perspectives, if not practices, attempting to make their prayers “more effective”.

That is, to get God to empty His pockets and give us what we want. **You can't coerce God into giving you less than His eternal best. So, if you want true rest then rest your tongue and trust.**

And, come under the wings of a loving Father.

And, receive the full covering of a Kinsman Redeemer.